

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## PART 1: In the Beginning

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### ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)***

God's creation is defined as his work by his Word and for his glory in creating the universe out of nothing so that its original condition was without spiritual or physical corruption.

## **I. WHAT DID GOD CREATE?**

### **A. God created the heavens and the earth**

1. The phrase "heavens and earth" includes the entire universe (Genesis 1; Rev. 4:11).
2. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 31 NIV).
3. When God finished his work of creation, he took delight in it.
4. Question: Is God responsible for sin since he created everything?

## **B. God created humans in his image**

1. Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, (Gen. 1:26 NIV).
2. Both the Hebrew word "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*) mean "similar to, but not identical to."
3. God created humans directly and instantly.
4. Humans were created to rule the earth (Genesis 1:27-28).
5. Because humans were created in God's image, they have a God-given dignity (the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect). However, the enemy seeks to belittle this dignity in every possible way.
6. God created them male and female. They were the first marriage partners and the pattern for all marriages (Genesis 1:27; 2:24).

## **C. Humans bear similarities with God**

1. We are like God morally (Matt. 27:3-5; Rom. 1:18-20).
2. We are like God spiritually (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 5:18).
3. We are like God mentally (Mark 12:30; Isa. 1:18).
4. We are like God relationally (John 14:23; Rev. 3:21).

## **D. God created time**

1. He operates apart from time.
2. He is not controlled by time (Job 36:26; Psa. 90:2, 4; John 8:58; 2 Pet. 3:8; Rev. 1:8).

## **E. God created the invisible spiritual universe**

1. "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him." (Col. 1:16)

# **II. WHY DID GOD CREATE?**

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## **A. God created to show his glory**

1. God created the universe to show his glory (Psalm 8:1; Col. 1:16).
2. Creation, in other words, is theocentric, and intended to display the glory of God; to be, as John Calvin says, 'the theatre of his glory.'

3. Thomas Aquinas: "God created so that his goodness may be communicated and manifested."<sup>1</sup>
4. Creation provides such clear evidence of God's existence that humans cannot deny it (Rom. 1:20).

## **B. God did not create because he was lonely**

1. "God did not create because he needed the world but because he delighted in his own will to create and in his act of creating."<sup>2</sup>
2. God did not need to create. He is complete within himself.

## **C. God's relationship to his creation**

1. God is immanent. He is actively involved in his creation (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).
2. God is transcendent. He is far above the creation in that he is greater than the creation and independent of it (2 Chron. 2:6; Isa. 55:8-9; Acts 7:42; 17:24; 1 Kings 8:27).

## **D. Major contrary views of God's relationship to his creation**

1. Deism: God created the universe, but he is not actively involved in it (God is not immanent; "Clockmaker" view).
2. Pantheism/Panentheism: Everything is God, including humans. There is therefore no God-human relationship (God is not transcendent).
3. Atheism/Materialism ("no God"): The material physical universe, which has always existed, is all that exists. Therefore, God does not exist.
4. Polytheism ("many gods"): There are many gods (Zeus, Apollo, Diana, etc.) and each one relates to humans in different ways.
5. Dualism: God is good; the material universe is evil. The two exist separately side by side.<sup>3</sup>

# **III. HOW DID GOD CREATE?**

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## **A. God created the universe out of nothing**

1. The Hebrew verb used to describe the creative act, (bārā') is what suggests "creation from nothing" (Lat: *creatio ex nihilo*) and is used only with Deity<sup>4</sup> (Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; cf. 2:3-4; 5:1-2; 6:7).
2. This *creatio ex nihilo* precludes the idea that matter is eternal (materialism, evolution).

3. Hebrews 11:3 NIV. "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."
4. God created by his Word, his decree, called "divine fiat creation." (Gen. 1:1-31; Exod. 20:11; 31:17; Psa. 33:6; 148:1-6; John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 4:11).<sup>5</sup>
5. God created Man out of the ground (Gen. 2:7 Heb. *Adamah*, meaning "man") was not created *ex nihilo*, but out of the dust of the ground.
6. God created the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air out of the ground (Gen. 2:19)

## B. The work of the Trinity in the creation

1. The God who created the universe is the triune God revealed in the Bible. "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness..." (Gen. 1:26).
2. God the Father: Initiated the divine work of creation and governed it (1 Cor. 8:6).
3. God the Son: In submission to the Father, God the Son created the universe (Psa. 33:6; 104:30; John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:10, 12).
4. God the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is pictured as completing, filling, and giving life to God's creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psa. 104:30; Isa. 40:12-13).
5. This work was not distributed; rather, each person of the Trinity acted in concert with the other two persons (perichoresis).

## C. Creation theories

Following is a brief summary of several creation theories that have been proposed but do not seem to be consistent with Scripture. Any theory of the origin of the universe, that does not see an infinite God as responsible for creating the universe by intelligent design, is inconsistent with the teachings of the Scriptures.

1. Darwinism: The body of theory dealing with biological evolution in general, and evolution by natural selection in particular<sup>6</sup>. Darwin never ruled out the possibility of God.<sup>7</sup>
2. Theistic Evolution Theory: The theory states that living organisms came about by the process of evolution that Darwin proposed, but God guided the process so that the result was just what God wanted it to be.<sup>8</sup>
3. Big Bang Theory: The universe began in a fantastic explosion that happened 15 billion years ago. In a secular form, this theory excludes God.
4. Myth Theory: The account in Genesis 1 is only symbolic; even though God

created the universe, the account is not historically correct; it is a myth.

5. Two-Phase Theory: This theory, also called the "prior creation theory," holds that there were two distinct phases of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, with a long period of time in between.<sup>9</sup> With this view, the duration of a "day" could be of any length.
6. The Gap Theory: Similar to the two-phase but assumes much more. The initial creation in Genesis 1:1 was complete and perfect but a catastrophe involving the fall of angels and Satan must have occurred during the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The six days of creation took place after this gap, and all geological ages took place between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.
7. Day-Age Theory: Since the Hebrew word for day (H. *yom*) can be interpreted as a 24-hour day, or a much longer period of time, this theory holds that God created everything in a series of acts over longer periods of time than 24-hour days. Each of the six "days" of creation would then equate to the six major geological ages (Paleozoic, Mesozoic, Cenozoic, etc.).
8. Flood Geology Theory: This theory holds that the earth is actually only a few thousand years old and that the six days of creation took place over six 24-hour days. During the flood, various forms of life were solidified into rock under great hydrostatic pressures. The various rock strata represent various enormous waves of the flood.
9. Literary-Framework Theory: This theory, (also called the "Pictorial-Day" theory), suggests that either God's revelation of long periods of creation were given to Moses in a series of six pictures, or the author arranged them by logical literary thought rather than in a chronological sequence. This would explain the parallels between the first and fourth days, the second and the fifth days, and the third and sixth days.
10. Ideal-Time Theory (Mature Creationism): This theory, supports the "young earth" theory and holds that God created the earth in a literal six-day period, but made it as if it were billions of years old. In other words, it was created at its "ideal time" (also called "mature creationism"). Therefore, Adam was not created as a baby, but was created at his ideal time, as a mature man. If God created trees at their ideal time, rather than as seeds, they would have had growth rings indicating a longer previous period.<sup>10</sup>

## **IV. WHEN DID GOD CREATE?**

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### **A. Were the six days of creation twenty-four-hour days?**

1. The word "day" (Heb. *yom*) in the Old Testament could mean a 24-hour

day or a much longer period of time.<sup>11</sup>

2. The word yom ("day") is used over 2,000 times in the Hebrew OT.
3. In over 95% of those occurrences, the word means a 24-hour day. (Most of the remaining 5% are expressions like the "day of the Lord.")<sup>12</sup>
4. Both views (24-hour days, or much longer periods of time) have valid supporting arguments, but God has chosen not to give us enough information to come to a clear decision on this question.
5. However, with regard to creation, most Bible scholars take "yom" to mean a literal 24-hour day.

## **B. The age of the earth: two views**

1. Old-earth view: The earth is about 4.5 billion years old ("Yom" = a very long period of time).
2. Young-earth view: The earth is approximately 10,000 to 20,000 years old ("Yom" = 24-hour day).<sup>13</sup>

## **C. The differences between scripture and science**

Bible scholar Bruce K. Waltke offers four differences between scripture and science.<sup>14</sup>

1. Genesis and science discuss essentially different matters—the transcendence of God is beyond the scientific grasp.
2. The language of Genesis and science is entirely different—the creation account is formed in everyday speech, and non-theoretical terminology rather than mathematics and technical terminology.
3. The purposes of Genesis and science also differ—Genesis answers the questions of who and why, whereas science attempts to answer what and how.
4. Science requires empirical testing for validation, while Genesis requires the validation of the witness of the Spirit to the heart (Rom. 8:16).

## **D. What about dinosaurs?**

1. Current scientific opinion holds that dinosaurs became extinct about 65 million years before humans appeared on earth.
2. Some say that 66 million years ago, dinosaurs had the ultimate bad day. With a devastating asteroid impact, a reign that had lasted 180 million years was abruptly ended.
3. Those who hold to six twenty-four-hour days of creation and a young earth view would say that dinosaurs were among the creatures created

by God on the same day he created man (sixth day). Therefore, they would say that dinosaurs subsequently became extinct - perhaps in the flood.

4. Those holding the old earth view would say that dinosaurs were created on the sixth day of creation, which was millions of years long, and that they became extinct by the time Adam was created.<sup>15</sup>

## **V. SUMMARY**

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1. Creation reveals God's eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20).
2. The size and vastness of the universe reveal God's glory.
3. All three persons in the Godhead were actively involved in the creation.
4. God did not create us because he was lonely. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have perfect fellowship within themselves.
5. God didn't create out of pre-existing physical matter.
6. We are to enjoy God's creation (Acts 14:17; 1 Tim. 6:17; Psa. 84:11).
7. Everything God created was good.
8. God created us simply because it was his will. He wanted to create us according for his good pleasure (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:9).
9. God is above and beyond his creation (his transcendence).
10. God is actively sustaining his creation (his immanence).
11. God's sovereignty controls his creation, no part of it controls him (Col. 1:16-17).
12. Creation is completely dependent upon God.
13. Creation itself gives clear evidence of God's existence so humans cannot say, "I never knew God existed" (Rom. 1:20).
14. Creation is for God's glory, and we are to give God glory by thankfully praising and honoring him as our Creator (Rom. 1:21; Rev. 4:11; Isa. 43:7).

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## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> (Geisler Volume 2, p. 465)

<sup>2</sup> (Bavinck and Bolt)

<sup>3</sup> (Grudem 269)

<sup>4</sup> (Merrill 50)

<sup>5</sup> Fiat creation is usually associated with creation over six 24-hour days.

<sup>6</sup> Darwinism: Probably the greatest difficulty of all for evolutionary theory is explaining how any life could have begun in the first place. The spontaneous generation of even the simplest living organism capable of independent life (the prokaryote bacterial cell) from inorganic materials on the earth could not happen by random mixing of chemicals: it requires intelligent design and craftsmanship so complex that no advanced scientific laboratory in the world has been able to do it. Johnson quotes a now-famous metaphor: "That a living organism emerged by chance from a pre-biotic soup is about as likely as that "a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein." Chance assembly is just a naturalistic way of saying "miracle." (Grudem 284)

<sup>7</sup> Darwin felt that science should be objective in nature, and was careful to keep any reference to God or a creator out of his earlier work. However, in his 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Origin of Species" he used the word "creator" nine times, and the word "God" twice. Of greater importance is what he said about life and the Creator's role in it. Michael Bargo Jr., "What Darwin Said about God" <[www.americanthinker.com](http://www.americanthinker.com)> accessed August 14, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> (Grudem 275)

<sup>9</sup> John H. Walton, Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 97.

<sup>10</sup> Ideal-time theory is also called "Creation with an Appearance of Age," or "Mature Creationism."

<sup>11</sup> For additional more detailed meanings of the word *yom*, see Geisler, pp. 1527-1528.

<sup>12</sup> Harold N. Miller, <http://www.interactingwithjesus.org/resources/genesis1.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> (Grudem 289). (Morris 149) Morris cites clear physical evidence for a Young Earth.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Waltke, "Genesis," pp. 74-75

<sup>15</sup> (Grudem 293)